

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I met with the executive director of the not-for-profit organization Helmets to Hardhats. Since 2003, Helmets to Hardhats has partnered with the Department of Defense, over 82,000 American businesses, and organized labor to help returning veterans prepare for and find work.

The current unemployment rate for returning veterans under the age of 24 is an unacceptable 38 percent. Helmets to Hardhats gives veterans the tools they need to start long-term careers in the construction trades. In 2008 alone, the organization placed nearly 1,800 military veterans into construction careers.

Mr. Speaker, the last of our combat troops has left Iraq, and we are winding down our military operations in Afghanistan. These veterans have put their lives on the line overseas, and they deserve the assistance of a grateful Nation when they return in order to ensure that they can participate in the economy and in lasting careers.

With that in mind, I congratulate Helmets to Hardhats, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

MEDICAID

(Mr. AL GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

Mr. Speaker, there is an effort afoot to move Medicaid from a needs-based program to a block grant program. This, of course, by some estimates, would save approximately \$180 billion.

Yet the question is not really how much money will it save. The question is, How many people will have their bodies healed by virtue of a reduction in the moneys that would go to Medicaid? How many lives will be saved is the question we have to ask ourselves.

In a country that is the richest in the world, the rich must pay their fair share of taxes so that all can benefit from the tax coffers and so that those who are poor and those who need health care can get a fair amount of health care.

I remind you again of what Kennedy said: If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY VERSUS CONTRACEPTION COVERAGE

(Ms. HANABUSA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, we began today's session with a debate on contraception. It seems to pit the availability and access to care, which I believe is a fundamental right, against

whether you can legislate the behavior of religious institutions. It seems like an intractable dilemma that we face, but that's not so.

Mr. Speaker, look to Hawaii. Since the 1970s, Hawaii has led the way in terms of medical plans and medical provisions. We have had prepaid health care since then, and of course, as you can imagine, we've had this debate. We had this debate in 1999. The way the State resolved it—and I was there—was that there was the religious exemption given for religious organizations broadly defined, but the employee was also entitled to buy coverage from the insurer at no extra cost.

What does this mean?

This means that it may have been, maybe, an additional \$2 or \$3 a month. The reality of it is, Mr. Speaker, that they didn't pay anything. The insurers covered it because they knew that it was in their best interests. And guess what? Many of the religious organizations did not opt out.

So don't speculate. See the reality. Look at Hawaii.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize Career and Technical Education Month. I am proud to be able to work with my colleague, G.T. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania, as he and I co-chair the Career and Technical Education Caucus.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the importance of the initiative that President Obama announced recently that supports partnerships between community colleges and expanding industry. It should be a bipartisan priority.

We've heard a lot about the skills gap that we're facing in this country, and businessowners repeatedly tell me that they cannot fill openings because the applicants lack the necessary skills. We need better collaboration between the companies doing the hiring and the educators who are preparing our students.

In my district, National Grid—the primary utility—and the Community College of Rhode Island offer a model program to prepare workers for available high-skilled jobs. Through coursework and hands-on training, students receive a certificate in Energy Utility Technology and can then become new employees.

Unfortunately, community colleges simply can't afford enough of these programs. The President's Community College to Career Fund is a small price to pay for the resulting benefit. It's a worthwhile program, and I believe that we need to support it.

Mr. Speaker, there are some partisan differences that this Congress, perhaps, cannot overcome, but the idea of mul-

tiplying this effort at our community colleges is a commonsense goal if our goal is, in fact, to put Americans back to work.

SMALL BUSINESS

(Mrs. DAVIS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, small businesses, from used furniture stores to restaurants to barber-shops, drive our economy, but they've had to take a haircut recently since they've been more subject to the ups and downs of the economy than, perhaps, anyone else.

Just last week, I visited small businesses in the San Diego communities of Lemon Grove and Spring Valley, and the people told me they need more customers walking in the doors with money to spend. Well, increasing consumer demand is a key part of our recovery, but it won't come right away. Yet we can use a more immediate tool to help these businesses grow in the meantime.

In the State of the Union address, the President mentioned 17 tax cuts for small businesses in order to put money in their pockets soon. Tax credits for hiring unemployed Americans and for health care costs will incentivize hiring and ensure that the Affordable Care Act is affordable for businesses to implement. An exemption from capital gains taxes for small business investments will spur small business spending and hiring. Also, the American Jobs Act has a provision which would reduce employers' contributions to the payroll tax for their employees.

I support measures like these to encourage the growth of small businesses in order to reignite the American Dream.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 16, 2012.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 16, 2012 at 9:48 a.m.:

That the Senate agreed to without amendment H. Con. Res. 99.

Appointments:
Washington's Farewell Address.
With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair